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Summary record of the 20th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 30 October 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 33: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*) (A/64/359-S/2009/470, A/64/494 and A/C.4/64/8)

1. **Mr. Eesiah** (Liberia) said that the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) continued to play a vital role in the peacebuilding efforts of his country and expressed gratitude to the countries that had contributed troops to the Mission. He expressed the hope that the reforms envisioned in the unofficial New Partnership Agenda study would enhance the efficiency of both the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support. He welcomed the proposal for peacekeepers to be better trained and the improvements in the areas of the rule of law, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and underscored the need to train police, customs and immigration officers in those areas and to provide them with proper equipment and logistical support. A subregional approach to peacebuilding was crucial. Indeed, the recent developments in Conakry, Guinea, had highlighted the need for peacebuilding programmes geared towards sustainable development which would provide job opportunities in the West African subregion.

2. **Mr. Zinsou** (Benin) said that the presentations by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support had highlighted the new challenges currently faced by peacekeeping. Referring to the unofficial New Partnership Agenda discussion paper, he noted that even if Member States were to develop a common understanding of concepts such as the protection of civilians and robust peacekeeping, countries with limited resources, such as his own, would simply not be able to afford the equipment and expertise required to implement those concepts on the ground, especially given the additional costs of new-generation peacekeeping equipment. Indeed, the timely and predictable reimbursement of troop- and equipment-contributing countries, especially developing countries, would enable those countries to establish peacekeeping funds for acquiring the equipment required for high-quality performance, thus easing the strain on national treasuries and averting social unrest in the current harsh economic climate.

Agenda item 28: Assistance in mine action (*continued*) (A/64/287; A/C.4/64/L.9)

3. **Mr. Vidal** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the States members and associated States of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), applauded the fact that 156 Member States had ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Achievements under that Convention demonstrated the positive effects of concerted action by the international community to address a grave humanitarian and development challenge, which had saved many lives. However, enormous challenges still loomed before the Second Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, shortly to be held in Cartagena, Colombia.

4. The perverse nature of anti-personnel landmines, which Uruguay was committed to helping to eliminate, was illustrated by the fact that they were activated by their victims, whether combatants or civilians; unless cleared or detonated they could remain active for years; they inflicted extremely serious wounds; they aimed to kill or maim for life; they had grave social and economic consequences and seriously restricted post-conflict rehabilitation capacity; and their removal was time-consuming, dangerous and costly.

5. MERCOSUR and the associated States were determined to succeed in the clearance and destruction of landmines in order to restore economic and social activities to the affected areas. In that connection, the 1991 Organization of American States (OAS) Mine Action Programme promoted the destruction of devices, as well as humanitarian assistance to victims and their economic reintegration. Its activities centred on the five pillars of minesweeping, preventive education of the civilian population, victim support and the destruction of stockpiled devices. He also commended the work done under the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010, which went beyond mine clearance and had set broader goals, including promoting development and helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The excellent work of the United Nations Mine Action Team not only provided support to national mine action programmes, but was also carried out directly through United Nations-managed programmes.

6. While implementation of article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention — destruction of

anti-personnel mines — had been positive, it was also complex, owing to a number of factors that prevented swift action, which was precisely why the Convention made provision for Member States to request an extension of the deadline. There was no reason why such requests should not serve as a vehicle for mine clearance and destruction, which was, after all, the ultimate aim.

7. The role of technical and financial assistance in enhancing States parties' capacities to meet the deadlines established in the Convention could not be overstated; the donor community must continue to meet its assistance obligations. Indeed, one of the biggest challenges facing the international community was how to adequately meet the needs of the countless landmine victims, including with respect to health, education, rehabilitation and reintegration. In that connection, he welcomed the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was instrumental in improving the victims' quality of life. Victim assistance must be included in all social services and must be addressed in the broader context of development assistance. The MERCOSUR States members and associated States therefore applauded the fact that the forthcoming Second Review Conference of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention would focus on the needs of victims, whose tragedy transcended the survivors' physical and psychological condition, and hindering the well-being, development and enjoyment of rights of the affected communities.

8. The donor community also had an important role to play in strengthening the State organs of affected countries, while the latter must themselves understand and fulfil their obligations, giving due consideration to victims' needs and aiming at objectively measurable results. MERCOSUR and its associated States wished to reaffirm that mine action was, in addition to a legal obligation of States parties to the Convention and other relevant international instruments, an ethical and moral imperative for the international community. All States were therefore encouraged to strengthen mine-clearance, risk-prevention, and victim-support activities with the help of the United Nations, regional organizations, civil society and the international community.

9. **Mr. Elghitany** (Egypt) said that with one fifth of the world's mines spread over one fifth of its territory, his country attached great importance to assistance in mine action. Over the past few decades, mines and the explosive remnants of war had caused hundreds of fatalities and thousands of injuries and severely impeded the exploitation of natural resources for development. Various United Nations resolutions, as well as the 2005 conference on development and mine-clearance from the northwest coast, jointly organized by the Egyptian National Council for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and chaired by former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had affirmed that the responsibility for clearing mines laid in western Egypt during the Second World War rested with the States parties to that war. Indeed, the outcomes of that conference included a call for developed countries and international organizations to provide Egypt with the necessary mine-clearance expertise and technology and for the establishment of a special fund for demining that region, to be financed partly by the States parties to the Second World War.

10. While Egypt fully supported the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, it had not been able to accede to it because of the requirement that States parties should clear their territories of mines within a specific period of time. That requirement was impossible to meet, owing to Egypt's limited resources and to the paucity of assistance provided by the States that had laid the mines. Furthermore, there were no maps showing the exact location of the mines or their displacement from their original location over the years. Although his country had not acceded to the Convention, it had announced a moratorium on the export of mines some three decades earlier, and had ceased all mine production in 1988. It also participated as an observer in all the meetings of the States parties to the Convention. His delegation would join the consensus on the resolution and continue to work for enhanced international cooperation on mine action.

11. **Mr. Antonio** (Mozambique) said that his country had integrated mine clearance, a top priority for the Government, into its Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty for 2005-2009. During that period, over 62,000 mines had been cleared from almost 50 million square metres of land under its national mine action plan. However, there were still over 12 million square metres that needed to be cleared of mines urgently, and his country had submitted to the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Awareness and Mine Action Technologies a request,

under article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, for an extension until 2014 of its December 2009 mine-clearance deadline. Mozambique would continue its mine clearance and mine awareness activities, and was grateful to international partners and donors for their support.

12. **Mr. Neville** (Australia) said that his country's Mine Action Strategy, funded through a five-year (2005-2010) $A75 million commitment, had helped to clear landmines across Asia and the Pacific and in parts of Africa and the Middle East, enabling victims to rebuild their lives. Australia used an integrated approach that placed mine action assistance within a broader context of development and poverty reduction. The fact that Australia was one of the original signatories to the Convention on Cluster Munitions bore eloquent testimony to its commitment to the global efforts to reduce the impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war.

13. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was highly relevant to mine action activities. His country's disability-inclusive development strategy sought to improve the quality of life of all persons with disabilities, including landmine victims.

14. Australia placed great importance on collaboration with international partners. It would continue its strong support for the vital activities of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), and looked forward to continuing working with the United Nations and other partners to achieve a world free of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

15. **Mr. Feleke** (Ethiopia), noting that mines and explosive remnants of war caused humanitarian and developmental problems, said that they could not be cleared without the concerted efforts of the international community. Assistance from the United Nations and other organizations had been of critical importance to national mine action programmes. Ethiopia, one of the most heavily mine-affected countries in the world, had established its own Mine Action Office well before becoming an early signatory to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Since signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007, it had made every effort to provide assistance to all persons with disabilities, including landmine victims.

16. Although it was a heavily mine-affected country, Ethiopia had, with the help of its partners, made great progress in reducing the impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war in its territory. In April 2009 it had achieved full compliance with its stockpile destruction obligation well ahead of the deadline provided for in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. While it would continue to allocate considerable resources from its own budget, it would also need continued international assistance to achieve its landmine clearance goals.

17. **Mr. Naeemi** (Afghanistan) said that landmines, cluster munitions and improvised explosive devices were an obstacle to international security and United Nations peacekeeping operations. They were an undeniable threat to post-conflict countries such as his own, one of the most heavily landmine-contaminated countries in the world. He welcomed Colombia's initiative to host the Second Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, noting that although considerable progress had been made since the Convention came into force, much still remained to be done before mines could be eradicated from the face of the Earth. In particular, humanitarian and development assistance to mine-affected countries should focus on comprehensive victim assistance.

18. Afghanistan had been battling the problem of landmines for over three decades, but despite concerted international efforts and the introduction of new technologies, landmine casualties had not substantially decreased over the previous few years. Over three quarters of the mined territory was agricultural land, so landmines were robbing Afghan farmers of their livelihoods as well as lives.

19. His country was doing more than at any time in its history to address the problem of landmines. Working together, the United Nations Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan and the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan had cleared more than 17 per cent of Afghanistan's minefields. His Government would continue to do everything in its power to ensure that the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons returning to their villages would not come home to minefields. However, Afghanistan would not be able to free itself entirely from the landmine threat without continuing technical and financial support from the international community.

20. **Ms. Jayasuriya** (Sri Lanka) said that, while her country had not yet acceded to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention because of legitimate security concerns, it remained committed to the Convention's humanitarian goals. It used landmines only for defensive purposes and mainly to demarcate the limits of military installations. Sri Lanka's current priority, in the wake of the 30-year conflict, was to expedite the voluntary return of displaced persons to their homes while maintaining acceptable standards of mine clearance. It had deployed 12 demining machines at a cost of $5 million, and planned to deploy more in the near future.

21. As of August 2009, Sri Lanka's national mine action programme had cleared mines from approximately 450 square kilometres of land in the northern and eastern parts of the country at a cost of almost $80 million dollars. There had been no mine fatalities during the reporting period (2005-March 2009) and injury rates had been reduced by 80 per cent. The Sri Lankan Army had played a key role in those efforts and had been assisted by several local and international non-governmental organizations. Mine-risk education activities carried out with the technical support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other organizations had been instrumental in raising mine awareness among children.

22. Providing victims with access to treatment and rehabilitation was an integral part of Sri Lanka's mine action. Mine clearance had also been integrated into UNDP assistance frameworks, and land cleared of mines had been released for infrastructure development, economic activity and resettlement. Providing continued international assistance for mine action was vital to addressing the issues of sustainable development, long-term peace, reconciliation and stability in post-conflict countries.

23. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that it would take years to clear the 12 million square metres of land that remained contaminated by the four million undetonated cluster bombs dropped by Israel in the last 72 hours of its 2006 war on Lebanon. His country was committed to helping others avoid the catastrophic effects of cluster munitions and had played an active role in developing the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions.

24. He expressed appreciation for the assistance of UNDP and UNMAS in helping Lebanon link its mine action programmes to national development and reconstruction plans. The Lebanon Mine Action Centre, together with the south Lebanon United Nations Mine Action Centre, had coordinated the clearance of 42 square kilometres of land and had been awarded the Nansen Refugee Award by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in recognition of its tireless efforts to help Lebanese displaced by the 2006 war to start living normal lives again.

25. Recent information received from Israel had failed to identify dozens of contaminated sites already known to the Lebanese Army and had not included the direction and altitude data necessary to pinpoint dispersion patterns. The Lebanese Army had also requested aerial photographs or videos of targets before and after bombardments and information on the types of ammunition used. The deaths and injuries of civilians, often children, that had been caused by the cluster bombs added yet another crime to the long list of humanitarian crimes for which Israel should be required to pay reparations.

26. **Mr. Ruddyard** (Indonesia) said that greater and effective support from the United Nations and relevant partners was vital for overcoming the challenges facing the United Nations Mine Action Service and Mine Action Team. Accordingly, the discussions on the very important issue of assistance in mine action provided all Member States with an opportunity to forge consensus on critical issues and build support for United Nations action in addressing the tragic issue of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. Indonesia, a party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, had endeavoured to raise awareness in the Asia-Pacific region of the importance of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It was his delegation's understanding that the agenda item on assistance in mine action was intended neither to universalize the two conventions for States parties nor to impugn the "legality" of a State that used landmines in legitimate self-defence.

27. On the contrary, the agenda item's unique role should be to unite Member States to enable both parties and non-parties to the relevant treaties to address landmine problems effectively through consensual creative and practical methods that could lead to tangible regional and international measures. Draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.9, which his delegation hoped would be adopted by consensus, still contained issues

that needed to be identified in future discussions; he trusted that it would be improved at subsequent sessions, particularly on how Member States and the United Nations system could advance mine action measures.

28. The Committee was not yet addressing the challenges facing the Secretariat, particularly in respect of mine action by United Nations peacekeeping operations, a subject which the Secretariat could perhaps encourage the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations to discuss. The multiple issues inherent in a robust United Nations mine action required greater coordination and collaboration within the Mine Action Team, and there the Mine Action Service could play a leading role. Lastly, he reiterated Indonesia's readiness to cooperate to provide tangible assistance to the tragic but brave victims of landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

29. **Mr. Arrocha** (Mexico) said that his delegation was aware of the imminent threat posed to the security, health and the life of the civilian population worldwide by landmines still in use in conflicts around the world and by those and other explosive remnants of war left over from past conflicts and in urgent need of clearance. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention played a key role in efforts to attain those objectives; States parties' full implementation and other States' accession would end the rise in the numbers of mine victims and allow efforts to concentrate on rebuilding and developing affected communities and reintegrating the victims.

30. Mexico, which had been actively involved in the negotiation of the Draft Cartagena Action Plan 2010-2014, "A Shared Commitment", especially section IV, "Assisting the victims", had stressed that the Action Plan should focus on specific activities, should be clearly drafted and should make use of synergies with other international humanitarian and human rights instruments. By the same token, States parties needed to develop a comprehensive national plan of action that addressed promotion of the rights of landmine victims in all its aspects and to establish an inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordination mechanism. The forthcoming Second Review Conference should make for closer cooperation among relevant stakeholders.

31. Advocating the rapid entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which would strengthen international humanitarian law and provide appropriate attention to current and potential victims, he exhorted States that had not yet done so to sign and ratify both conventions in order to speed up the process towards a world free of mines and cluster munitions.

32. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to take action on draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.9* on assistance in mine action. Announcing that Eritrea, El Salvador, Mali and Ukraine had become sponsors of the draft resolution, he said that no programme budget implications were anticipated.

33. **Ms. Hernández Toledano** (Cuba) said that, although her country would join the consensus, it had not sponsored the draft resolution. Measures should be taken to ensure that such an error did not occur again in future.

34. **Mr. Malme** (Norway) said that, while his delegation would join the consensus, it would have preferred a text giving more prominence to national authorities in mine-affected countries and placing greater emphasis on national ownership of mine action. The international community had a role to play but non-affected States and international organizations could only assist the efforts of affected countries. The United Nations Mine Action Team made valuable contributions by building capacity and putting mine action in a broader humanitarian and development perspective. The Secretariat should, however, refrain from becoming an operator in the field of mine action.

35. *Draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.9* was adopted.*

Agenda item 30: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/64/20; A/C.4/64/L.2/Rev.1)

Draft resolution A/C.4/L.2/Rev.1

36. **Mr. González** (Colombia) introduced draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.2/Rev.1 on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, noting that the sixth preambular paragraph and paragraphs 21, 26, 27, 28, 41 and 46 had been amended during the meetings of the Working Group of the Whole. Paragraph 29 had also been introduced. It had been agreed by the Working Group that the phrase at the end of paragraph 28, "set up national space entities to lay the foundation for a regional entity for cooperation", should be placed between quotation marks.

* Reissued for technical reasons.

37. **The Chairperson** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

38. **Mr. González** (Chile) said that he was surprised to note a change in the wording of paragraph 26 of the draft resolution, which he had understood would refer to promoting and strengthening, rather than encouraging, interregional dialogue. He went on to point out a linguistic error in the Spanish language version of paragraph 28 of the resolution. Furthermore, it had been his understanding that paragraph 29 would also include a reference to the support of the International Group of Experts.

39. **Mr. Figueirôa** (Brazil) asked whether the word "promote" in paragraph 26 had been found to entail programme budget implications. Paragraph 29, as originally proposed by his delegation, had not contained a reference to the International Group of Experts.

40. **Mr. González** (Chile) said that when he had discussed the original text of paragraph 26 with the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, he had been informed that the proposed language had no programme budget implications. The International Group of Experts was a body operating within the framework of the Space Conference of the Americas and he could not see any problem with including it in the resolution by name. The representative of Colombia appeared to be ignoring the authority of the Chairman of the Committee. Indeed, the other errors in the draft resolution suggested that insufficient care had been taken in reproducing the text.

41. **Mr. González** (Colombia) said that his delegation had been very careful to ensure that the text of the resolution corresponded to what had been agreed by the Working Group. It had, moreover, been available to delegates for several days.

42. **The Chairperson** suggested that, in the absence of a consensus, consideration of the draft resolution should be deferred to a later date.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.